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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KYIV 000465

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SUBJECT: UKRAINIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS ON THE ROCKS

Classified By: Ambassador William Taylor for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶](#)1. (C) Contacts within the Presidential Secretariat, MFA and Cabinet of Ministers continue to view Germany as an obstacle in their drive towards EU and NATO membership, while underlining the importance of maintaining a constructive bilateral relationship with Berlin. The Secretariat claims Berlin has turned down President Yushchenko's overtures for an invite, requiring signs of unity between him and PM Tymoshenko as a precondition. German Embassy staff remain engaged on a series of bilateral issues, but describe an at times difficult relationship with the MFA. The cumulative bilateral stresses were brought into focus by former National Security and Defense Council Chairman Horbulin, who recently glibed to us: "there are two Russian embassies in Kyiv; only one speaks German." End Summary.

Presidential Secretariat Regrets Lack of Engagement

[¶](#)2. (C) Bohdan Yaremenko, Deputy Head of the Presidential Secretariat Foreign Policy Section, on March 11 told us that it was "no secret" that relations with Berlin were strained. He noted that Berlin had set GOU unity as a precondition for a Yushchenko visit, wanting to avoid getting in the middle of the ongoing fight between the President and PM Tymoshenko. He said there were also signals from Paris that a Yushchenko visit would not be welcomed until the GOU "spoke with one voice." There is ongoing activity within lower level bilateral working groups, but the lack of engagement at senior levels risked harming the Ukraine-German relationship, according to Yaremenko. He did note that Senior Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Honcharuk was headed to Berlin on March 12.

MFA Hopes for More Positive Relationship

[¶](#)3. (C) Andrii Kuzmenko, MFA Deputy Director for the Second Territorial Directorate (which covers the EU and its members), on March 4 described Germany's approach toward Ukraine as "lacking in understanding." He said Berlin sees the current levels and mechanisms of EU-Ukrainian interaction as sufficient, while Kyiv sought to "deepen, strengthen, and intensify" its engagement. He noted disappointment in Chancellor Merkel's public comments regarding the Eastern Partnership as not necessarily representing an avenue to membership. In general, Ukraine views the Eastern Partnership process as underfunded, with only euros 350 million in new funding available in 2010 to all six partners, and lacking in specific goals. Kuzmenko noted that Ukraine would have little interest in participating in the process in the event it "keeps us standing in place, while Armenia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan are slowly brought to our level."

[¶](#)4. (C) Kuzmenko's personal irritation with Berlin's current approach was palpable, but he also highlighted the importance of remaining engaged with Germany. He noted that Ukraine had recently been invited as a formal observer to the "Weimar Triangle" process that Germany and France developed with

Poland in the 1990s. Kuzmenko expressed hope that an avenue for more positive engagement would open following Germany's upcoming elections.

Cabinet of Ministers Guarded

¶ 15. (C) Vadym Triukhan, Director of the Cabinet of Ministers' Bureau of Euro and Euroatlantic Integration, told us that both Germany and France had adopted a tough position on Ukraine, not only in NATO in such issues as MAP, but also within the EU. He cited the example of President Sarkozy initially proposing an "Association Partnership" with Ukraine in 2007, which was seen as a step backwards by Kyiv, before subsequently agreeing to the more palatable "Association Agreement" construct. Triukhan also noted that Germany was the toughest within the EU regarding Ukrainian compliance with standards on all international agreements -- citing the ongoing talks on a visa regime and airspace deal.

German Embassy Defensive; Donetsk Consulate Planned

¶ 16. (C) Our German counterparts were notably taken aback by the series of sharp public attacks following the April 2008 NATO Summit when Germany was widely portrayed in the local media as having blocked Ukraine's MAP application. A mass demonstration by Party of Regions supporters in front of the German Embassy in support of Berlin's stance in Bucharest immediately after the Summit was an embarrassment to many of our contacts within the German mission. Sigrun Meyer, Public Affairs Counselor, recently told us that she and her

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colleagues were now used to being publicly attacked for issues ranging from German visa issuances to Berlin's stance in the latest gas crisis "as the GOU often needs us to hide their own failings." She pointed out that Germany had doubled its long-term work visas in the previous year and eliminated their visa backlog, but that these developments hadn't been widely reported by a media that had grown used to negative portrayals of Berlin's bilateral efforts.

¶ 17. (C) The Foreign Ministry had recently decided to replace their honorary consul in Donetsk with a consulate, focused on business outreach and providing visa services for Eastern Ukraine -- the announced opening of the consulate in 2010 had the Embassy scrambling to complete staffing patterns, property acquisition and other preparatory work, according to Meyer. Meyer also highlighted the activities of her Ambassador, Heinz-Juergen Heimsoeth, in participating with several EU counterparts in a recent trip to Crimea. Germany was refocusing its bilateral aid to concentrate in large part on the peninsula, launching a series of programs to support civic organizations in Sevastopol, Simferopol and other key centers. (Note: Heimsoeth has been seen by some in the MFA as a downgrading by Berlin. His previous posting was as CG in New York and he had not previously held an Ambassadorial post. Germany's previous Ambassador, Reinhard Schaefers, had served as Berlin's EU Envoy prior to his Kyiv assignment and is now serving as Ambassador in Paris.)

Working Around the MFA

¶ 18. (C) Meyer indicated that MFA was viewed within the Embassy as increasingly ineffective, requiring notes verbale for basic requests and that officers were turning directly to action Ministries and especially to Cabinet of Ministers staff under DPM Nemyria to get timely action. Meyer wouldn't speculate on whether it was a competence/experience question within MFA Germany Desk or more of a targeted effort by the MFA to signal their frustration with Berlin. She added that Embassy personnel were increasingly frustrated by their inability to receive clear answers or fully understand the decision making process within the fractured political and

Ministerial landscape in Kyiv.

Comment

¶9. (C) Germany's caution regarding Ukraine's EU/NATO membership aspirations has engendered frustration within the GOU. German diplomats in Kyiv reject the notion that Berlin is too sensitive to Moscow's concerns in its relationship with Ukraine. The Ukrainian political elite tends to feel otherwise, as evidenced by the gibe former National Security Advisor Horbulin recently shared with us: "there are two Russian Embassies in Kyiv -- only one speaks German."

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